

American

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North Korea's Activities at "Center" of U.S.-China Relationship

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Senior State Department officials say China and the United States share the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula and that both countries will need to work together and with partners in East Asia to resolve North Korea's status as a nuclear weapons state.

Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee March 1 that nuclear activity by North Korea "is an issue which is at the very center of the U.S.-China relationship."

He acknowledged that China's concern over stability in North Korea sometimes creates "understandable tensions" with its desire to eliminate nuclear weapons on the peninsula.

But neither country wants "to see North Korea as a nuclear weapon state on an ongoing basis," Bosworth said, and each has "a major stake in demonstrating that, working together with our other partners in the region, we can solve this problem or at least manage this problem over the longer term because ... in some sense it is a litmus test to the ability of the United States and China to work together on broader issues."

Bosworth described North Korea as "a pole of instability in the heart of what is arguably the most important economic region of the world today," and said its activities pose "an enduring challenge" to the interests of its neighbors, as well as the United States.

"This is a challenge that must be dealt with," he said. "We do not have the option, in my judgment, of simply biding our time and ignoring them."

The Obama administration is pursuing a two-track policy of working with the international community to tighten economic sanctions targeting North Korea's leadership and its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, while also remaining open to "constructive dialogue," he said.

"We view diplomacy ultimately as the best way of solving these difficulties and this challenge," he said, but the United States is looking for evidence that North Korea is prepared to carry out commitments it has already agreed to, such as its September 2005 agreement with South Korea, Japan, Russia, China and the United States to abandon its nuclear programs.

"It's very difficult to go forward with confidence and make new agreements if they are not able to adhere to the ones that we've already put in place," Bosworth said.

He also said the Obama administration has repeatedly told North Korea that while the United States believes that a change in its regime's behavior is "necessary to any fundamental improvement in the overall relationship" between the two countries, "regime change is not the objective" of U.S. policy.

"It may be that they don't believe us or that they don't fully trust us, but I don't think they should be operating under the fear that somehow we are dedicated and determined to undermine the regime," he said.

Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell told the Senate panel that the United States is determined to "break the cycle" of North Korea's provocations, which threaten both regional and global security.

In his testimony, Campbell recalled North Korea's March 2010 sinking of the South Korean naval vessel Cheonan, its November 2010 artillery shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, its November 2010 disclosure of a uranium enrichment program, as well as its ongoing nuclear and ballistic missile programs and its human rights violations.

"Despite the tremendous opportunities that we see in Asia that have become part of our popular discourse, one country indeed stands out as an outlier and in fact an impediment to the region's promising future: the DPRK, North Korea," he said.

Campbell said the United States is "committed to addressing these issues through an active and determined diplomacy using all elements of our policy at our disposal with all the parties involved."

He said many countries that previously had never been involved with efforts to stop illegal cargo shipments from North Korea to Asian and Middle Eastern countries are now assisting the United States in turning back shipments.

"We've also been able to target some specific entities that are involved in providing hard currency to elite groups around the leadership. And our evidence suggests that, in fact, many of these efforts do indeed bite and have created some difficulties overall for the leadership," he said.

Through United Nations Security Council resolutions 1718 and 1824, as well as unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States and other countries, North Korea "is probably the most heavily sanctioned country in the world," Campbell said, and the Obama administration

will continue to urge its partners in the region to robustly enforce measures designed to make it more difficult for North Korea to pursue illegal activities.

Secretary Clinton Urges Congress to Approve Obama's Budget

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton urged Congress to approve President Obama's budget request for the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development, and warned that cutting funding could harm key investments in countries across the Middle East.

"The entire region is changing, and a strong and strategic American response is essential," Clinton said in testimony March 1 to the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee.

Although Committee Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen emphasized in her opening remarks the need for the United States to "maintain firm ties" with its allies, she has supported budget cuts for federal agencies including the State Department. Clinton said the proposed cuts, included in a House bill passed in February, "would be devastating to our national security."

The secretary defended the \$47 billion core request, calling it a "lean budget for lean times." She added that, if approved, the budget "will allow us to keep pressing ahead" on "missions vital to our national security."

She said U.S. involvement in the Middle East is critical to both regional and global security.

"The entire region is changing, and a strong and strategic American response is essential. In the years ahead, Libya could become a peaceful democracy, or it could face protracted civil war, or it could descend into chaos. The stakes are high," Clinton said.

In Libya, she said, USAID has provided food and medical supplies and is set to dispatch two expert humanitarian aid teams to help people moving into Tunisia and Egypt to flee the violence.

She called the U.S. response to widespread unrest in the Middle East an "unfolding example of how we use the combined assets of smart power — diplomacy, development and defense — to protect Americans' security and advance our values."

"This integrated approach is not just how we respond to the crisis of the moment. It is the most effective — and

cost-effective — way to sustain and advance our security across the world. And it is only possible with a budget that supports all the tools in our national security arsenal," Clinton said.

The secretary said during the past two years, investments in development and diplomacy have led to tangible returns for U.S. national security.

"In Iraq, almost 100,000 troops have come home and civilians are poised to keep the peace. In Afghanistan, integrated military and civilian surges have helped set the stage for our diplomatic surge to support Afghan-led reconciliation that can end the conflict and put al-Qaida on the run," Clinton said, adding that the United States has also "imposed the toughest-ever sanctions to rein in Iran's nuclear ambitions."

She underscored the State Department's ongoing work "to open political systems, economies and societies at a remarkable moment in the history of the Middle East and to support peaceful, orderly, irreversible democratic transitions in Egypt and Tunisia."

Clinton said the State Department budget has strengthened U.S. alliances and partnerships, and that across the board, leaders are working to ensure "all who share the benefits of our spending also share the burdens of addressing common challenges."

She said among the top budget priorities are key investments in international human security, global health programs and worldwide food security, and she highlighted the importance of funding to maintain diplomatic ties with 190 nations around the world.

U.N. Unanimously Votes to Suspend Libya from Human Rights Council

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — All 192 member nations of the United Nations General Assembly have voted to suspend Libya from the U.N. Human Rights Council due to its government's violent attacks on protesters opposed to Muammar Qadhafi's rule.

Speaking in New York March 1, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan Rice described the vote as "unprecedented" and "a harsh rebuke — but one that Libya's leaders have brought down upon themselves."

Libya was elected to the 47-member council in May 2010. The final tally of the vote on the resolution calling for its suspension far exceeded the two-thirds majority that was

required to approve it.

The United States was a co-sponsor of the resolution. Rice said the General Assembly's action sends "another clear warning to Mr. Qadhafi and those who still stand by him" that they "must stop the killing" in Libya.

"When the only way a leader can cling to power is by grossly and systematically violating his own people's human rights, he has lost any legitimacy to rule. He must go, and he must go now," Rice said.

Rice applauded the U.N. body for its "historic decision," and said it had acted "in the noblest traditions of the United Nations."

"Membership on the Human Rights Council should be earned through respect for human rights, and not accorded to those who abuse them," Rice said.

The resolution followed passage of a measure by the Geneva-based council on February 25 that recommended Libya's suspension due to its "gross and systematic violations of human rights." The Human Rights Council also called for the dispatch of "an independent, international commission of inquiry" to investigate alleged human rights violations.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton had urged the General Assembly to vote to suspend Libya in her February 28 remarks to the council, saying "Governments that turn their guns on their own people have no place in this chamber."

During the council's February 25 session, U.S. Ambassador Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe said Libya's continued participation in the body "undermines the core mission of the council and its mandate and goals."

International Women's Day Shows How Women Can Help Women Succeed

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants," the world's great scientific intellectual Isaac Newton wrote in 1676. The accomplishments of women, too, owe much to the "giants" who preceded them — women who bravely endured painful ridicule and overcame huge obstacles to obtain the same opportunities afforded to men.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the first International Women's Day, celebrated on March 8, which recognizes women's past struggles and accomplishments and focuses on what needs to be done to provide greater

opportunities for women today.

International Women's Day is an official holiday in 15 countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Vietnam). But most countries celebrate the day with thousands of events. According to the official website for International Women's Day, the countries sponsoring the most events for International Women's Day are the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Australia and Ireland.

Each country picks a different theme every year to reflect global and local gender issues. In the United States, the 2011 theme is "Our History Is Our Strength."

Among the thousands of Americans who blazed trails for women are Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman to achieve a medical degree in the United States (1849); Susanna Madora Salter, the first woman elected to any political office in the United States when she was voted mayor of Argonia, Kansas, in 1887; Jane Addams, political activist and women's advocate, the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize (1931); and Shirley Chisholm, who became in 1968 the first African-American woman elected to the U.S. Congress.

Women today continue to make history and are providing the "broad shoulders" upon which other women can see further into a future of wider possibilities. Condoleezza Rice, the first African-American woman to hold the position of U.S. secretary of state, established the Women of Courage award in 2007 to honor women around the globe who have shown exceptional courage in promoting women's rights. So far, 36 women representing 27 countries have been recognized for their efforts to further women's rights, end violence against women and promote women's health.

Hillary Rodham Clinton, the current secretary of state and the first woman to become a leading candidate for the U.S. presidential nomination when she ran against Barack Obama, has been a longtime women's advocate. She has joined President Obama in aggressively promoting women's issues both in the United States and abroad.

Early in his presidency, President Obama created a position at the White House, now held by Lynn Rosenthal, to advise the president and vice president on domestic violence and sexual assault issues in the United States. The president also created a new position at the U.S. State Department: ambassador-at-large for global women's issues. Melanne Verveer, who has a long career working for the advancement of women, was appointed to that position to mobilize support worldwide for women's rights and to combat violence against women and girls in all its forms.

For 2011, Clinton is launching the “100 Women Initiative: Empowering Women and Girls through International Exchanges” and a new maternal- and child-health initiative. Clinton has said that the United States “is making women a cornerstone of foreign policy because we think it’s the right thing to do, but we also believe it’s the smart thing to do as well.”

“Investing in the potential of the world’s women and girls,” according to Clinton, “is one of the surest ways to achieve global economic progress, political stability, and greater prosperity for women — and men — the world over.”

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